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SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: CDC HOLDS FIRST TRAINING COURSE IN IRAQ

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: At the instigation of the Salah ad Din Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), CDC has conducted its first training course in Iraq, which was enthusiastically received by Iraqi medical professionals. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) PRT Salah ad Din shared in the success of the first Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) course offered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Iraq since liberation. Drawing on its close ties to CDC, the PRT's Health section had strongly encouraged CDC to sponsor this training in Iraq in preparation for the upcoming cholera season.

¶4. (U) The eight-day course began on Tuesday, April 27 at the Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad and was opened by the Minister of Health, the WHO representative for Iraq, and the U.S. Embassy's Health Attach. Forty-two of the 45 invited health professionals attended - an outstanding level of turnout that reflected the great thirst for learning within the Iraqi medical profession. The Director General of Health for Salah ad Din province has quickly endorsed this course, understanding its importance; he nominated eight health professionals to attend - the largest number of participants from any province besides Baghdad. Lectures and exercises were conducted by faculty from the Iraq Ministry of Health, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU), the World Health Organization, and CDC.

¶5. (U) CDC's FETP is designed to improve the skill sets of health professionals in disease outbreak investigations and response capabilities - ideally targeted at the local and provincial levels. This training came at an opportune time as Iraq enters what is normally a season when various diseases break out, including cholera. Participants learned about disease surveillance systems, data-collection, organization, and analysis, and presentation of those findings. They also learned the process to identify the potential source of an outbreak, the possible means of transmission, and perhaps most importantly how to recommend measures to control the outbreak.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: Overall the participants were very enthusiastic; the Iraqis' thirst for new knowledge was exemplified by a 10:30 p.m. visit from the Minister of Health to observe the teams working on an exercise. The following day, the Minister returned with a large group of media to attend the closing ceremony. The course also provided an opportunity for discussion of establishing a sustainable FETP in Iraq in the near future. As in other countries, a pyramidal approach to establishing this program is planned, and will consist of short courses such as the one just completed, more in-depth courses of intermediate duration (several months) with more field emphasis, and the classic 2-year FETP based on the concept of "training through service." END COMMENT.

CROCKER